The Soul of an Old Machine’

Managing moveable industrial heritage

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The nature of moveable heritage

Almost anything can be moveable, if you have a big enough crane…
Principles of moveable heritage management

• Retain movable heritage within its relationship to places and people, unless there is no prudent or feasible alternative to its removal.

• Remove movable heritage from its relationship to places and people only when the items and collections are under threat and this is the only means of safeguarding or investigating significance.

• Provide community access to movable heritage and encourage interpretation.

Types of moveable heritage

• Machinery
• Tools
• Structures, or parts of structures
• Vehicles
• Uniforms
• Elements of infrastructure
• Records and documents
Challenges and issues

- Scale
- Costs of management & movement
- Contamination
- Operational context
- Meaningful interpretive opportunities

Moveable ‘soul’

- What are the important aspects of the industry?
- How are those illustrated by the moveable collection?
- What purpose will the collection serve?
- Who is the audience?
SWC Moveable Heritage Collection

- No collection policy
- Retention was based on chance or personal interest of staff
- Many collections scattered across sites
- Not catalogued or accessible

SWC Moveable Heritage Program

- 3 Year project
- 1st year developed guidelines & collections policy
- 2nd & 3rd years identified and assessed items
- Collection contains about 430 items
- About 1/3 have been identified for disposal
The ‘soul’ of Sydney Water

- Tightly focussed themes:
  - Water
  - Sewerage
  - Drainage
  - Administration
  - Social history
- Accurately & simply describes the industry
- Now used as the basis for Archives management

Managing moveable industrial heritage

- Work out the ‘soul’ of your industry
- Focussed collections & disposals policy
- Systematic assessment process
- Creative consideration of interpretation